'Her ladyship's foolish:'

The Servant's Disobedience in John Webster's *The White Devil*

John Webster's *The White Devil* (1612) has attracted considerable critical attention, focusing on, among others, its intervention in the early modern debate on 'the nature of women' and depiction of female sexuality (Luckyj, 'Boy Prince'), its reflection on court life in Jacobean England (Brennan xix), its depiction of the after-effects of the Reformation (Williamson), its engagement with the tradition of revenge tragedy (Purcell 89), its intertextuality with contemporary plays (Weil), and, no less important, its engagement with contemporary debates about race.[1] While these studies have gone a long way to enrich our understanding of the play and, more broadly, of Webster's theatre, as will be clear from my indebtedness to many of them throughout this paper, there is an aspect of the play which remains under-investigated: the role of Zanche, Vittoria Corombona's maidservant. Zanche does feature in criticism of the play, of course, but this criticism seems to limit itself to her identity as a *black* servant, hence focusing on her Otherness and reading her as the black devil of the play,[2] the antithesis of the white devil of its title (Purcell 71; Brennan xvi).[3] While this aspect of Zanche's character is important and those studies that focus on it offer significant insights into the play as a whole, I want in this paper to focus on Zanche as a domestic servant, one whose character was shaped and framed by Webster's understanding of household service as theorized and practised in seventeenth-century England.[4] I argue that Zanche's disobedience to her mistresses, her treachery as well as her sexual forwardness should all be read within two contexts: the anxieties about domestic servants expressed in contemporary conduct literature and the wider context of the play's depiction of Vittoria. The world of the play, I argue, is one of domestic chaos[5] and disorder where a mistress's transgression in terms of her (however indirect) involvement in the murder of her husband and her adultery set in train a series of subversive behaviours that culminate in the figure of the disobedient servant.[6] In

making this argument, I take a lead from Elizabeth M. Brennan who wrote that Vittoria's 'household reflects the moral chaos of the state' (xix), exploring the domestic disorder at the heart of this house. Essential to my argument is my contention that *The White Devil* should be read within the context and tradition of the English domestic tragedies that flourished between the 1590s and the mid-1600s, exploring dysfunctional households similar to the one explored in Webster's play and depicting servants in situations similar to Zanche's. Making this connection, however, I believe that Webster's play is not a didactic piece that simplistically punishes and silences the disobedient servant to do the cultural work of assuaging anxieties surrounding this figure, as is common in most domestic tragedies. *The White Devil*'s project goes beyond that of domestic tragedies whose project, as neatly summed up by Elizabeth Williamson, was 'us[ing] family conflicts to explore the problems surrounding the maintenance and restoration of social order' (487). In its depiction of Zanche, Webster's play does not attempt to 'restore' social order by putting penitent words in the mouth of its disobedient servant. The restoration of order comes from above, the figure of the new Duke Giovanni meting out punishment to offenders in the last scene,[7] a restoration that Zanche is emphatically not a part of. Zanche's rebellion and disobedience is paralleled with Vittoria's, and the two women come together in their final scene, only to reveal important aspects of Webster's exploration of disobedience in this play: as Vittoria seems to recant her earlier disobedience and transgression, Zanche takes pride in hers and dies on an emphatic note of defiance, as we shall see.

Zanche's disobedience and treachery emanate from the disorder that engulfs the house in which she is employed. At the heart of this play lies a house that has no head; Vittoria and Camillo, her husband, are irresponsible governors of this house. In the early modern period, commentators on the domestic frequently held the opinion that the failure of the master and mistress of the house to keep it in order caused disobedience and transgression. House order

was often assigned crucial importance as explained by the two contemporary commentators, John Dod and Robert Cleaver:

> An houshold is as it were a little Commonwealth, by the good gouernment whereof, Gods glorie may be aduanced, and the commonwealth which standeth of seuerall families benefited; and all that liue in that familie receiue much comfort and commoditie. (sig. A7r)

The analogy constructed between the house and the state was commonplace at the time, as was the sense that disorder in the house would create disorder in the commonwealth. Of particular importance to my purposes in this paper is the moralists' emphasis on the sense of 'comfort' and 'commoditie' (i.e. profit; gain (OED. 2c, d)) that all those who share the house would experience as a result of its being kept in order. Implied in the moralists' assertion as well is the sense that the effects of domestic disorder will be felt beyond its immediate authority figures, extending to 'all that liue in that familie'. Echoing Dod and Cleaver, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Edward Topsell stressed the necessity of applying good domestic government, evoking the household/state analogy: '*Houshold Gouernment [is]* the Parent & first beginner of Common-wealthes, the Seminary of Kingdoms, & Counsels; […] and Disciplinarie schoole of a wise, vertuous, and happy life' (sig. *5v). The sense of the effect of good house order on those within the house is evident in Topsell's styling of the well-governed house as a 'Disciplinarie schoole of a wise, vertuous, and happy life.' It could only be inferred that the ill-governed house would be a school of a vicious and miserable life.

It is my contention that the house in which Zanche is employed is not properly governed and that, her consequent disobedience and violation of domestic hierarchies (about which more later), are to be read within this context as signifiers that register this disorder

and are resultant from it.[8] Similar to a number of domestic tragedies, *The White Devil* dramatizes the story of the dysfunctional house in which Zanche is a domestic servant: her master, Camillo, is one of those 'failed patriarchs' that Susan Amussen has recently explored (2017). He is not only depicted as an idiot (his wife is seduced before his eyes),[9] and possibly impotent (his preparation to join his wife in bed is described as 'travailing,' suggesting the sense of struggle that sex constitutes for him (I.ii.53),[10] as John Russell Brown's gloss on the word suggests (38); two lines later, he admits: 'I do not well remember, I protest/ When I last lay with her' (I.ii.55-6)). He is also described in effeminate terms: Flamineo, speaking of him, says: 'I will […] set him gadding presently.' The term 'gadding' had particularly feminine connotations in the period, as Anu Korhonen informs us: 'Gadding [was] a female way of spending time in the streets, talking to each other and showing themselves to passers-by' (346). Moreover, he is said to have a 'false stone' (I.ii. 142), suggesting dysfunctional male testicles (Partridge 250). Registering the sense of his lack of control over his house, moreover, Camillo hands over the keys of the house to Flamineo who proceeds to lock him up in a chamber (I.ii.187-8). Ownership of house keys, as Amanda Flather writes, signified 'control over access to the house and use of its rooms,' a form of authority exclusive to the house masters (46). Thus, Camillo's act of handing over the keys is an act of abdication of domestic authority. Furthermore, Camillo's incarceration in a domestic space underlines his effeminate status by limiting his movement and controlling his mobility in a way that contemporary misogynistic literature suggested that women be treated, as ironically expressed by the play's own misogynist Flamineo to the anxious Camillo: 'lock up your wife' so she will not be able to cuckold him (I.ii.77). Vittoria, Zanche's mistress, is not more apt as a household mistress. Rather than fulfilling her duty to

> […] order her houshold affaires […] carefully […] to see good orders obserued as he [the husband] hath appointed: to watch ouer the manners and behauiour of such as be in her house, and to helpe her husband in spying out euils that are breeding, that by his wisedome they may be preuented or cured,

as Dod and Cleaver instruct (sig. D6r), Vittoria, like Amussen's 'unruly women' (2017), is preoccupied with pursuing her love affair with Duke Bracciano.[11] In Act 1, scene ii, she eagerly asks her brother-turned-pander, Flamineo: 'How shall's rid him [her husband] hence?' (162), revealing an active role in the seduction that is about to ensue and then engaging in what Lara Bovilsky has termed 'extraordinarily elaborate sex-play with the Duke Bracciano' (471). The dream she shares with the Duke, claiming that it has disturbed her sleep, suggests, if not prescribes, a way to deal with the two impediments to her and Bracciano's passion. Her nightmare of being attacked by 'my husband' and 'your fell [i.e. shrewd; cruel (OED. 1a, 3)] duchess' ends happily, for her, as, she says, 'both were struck dead' (255). Stephen Purcell has seen as 'significant [the fact] that it is she, not Camillo, who bids the Duke good night' before she exits in this scene (8). Importantly, Vittoria offers Duke Bracciano hospitality on the night her husband is murdered by the Duke's order, and he magically views the murder '[b]eneath her roof' (II.ii.51), thus spatially implicating her in the act.

These details of Webster's depiction of Vittoria affiliate her with another dissatisfied wife who, together with her lover, successfully carries out the murder of her husband in a domestic tragedy that heralded the genre in 1592. *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham* and the domestic tragedies that followed it seem to me to be an important context within which to consider *The White Devil* and one that has not been examined before. Mistress Alice Arden, like Vittoria, agitates to rid herself of this 'block' (i.137),[12] her husband, that impedes her path to happiness with her lover, Mosby. Deciding that 'Sweet Mosby is the man that hath

my heart;/ And he [Arden] usurps it' (i.98-9), Mistress Arden orchestrates five attempts on her husband's life, succeeding in the last one, herself delivering a fatal thrust to his breast and explaining: 'Take this for hind'ring Mosby's love and mine' (xiv.238).

Another domestic tragedy in whose light I want to explore the delinquent government of this house and thus think about its consequences for its servant Zanche is Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603). This play similarly depicts a dysfunctional house whose master has introduced chaos in the form of his friend, making him his 'companion' (iv.71)[13] in a move that suggested to a number of critics an arrangement similar to marriage and which, thus, makes his wife redundant (Gutierrez 275). The mistress of the house has an affair with this resident friend and the result is tragedy to all those involved. Important to my purposes is the fact that both plays explore the effect of disordered houses on domestic servants. The *Tragedy of Arden of Faversham* depicts the disorder and catastrophic erosion of hierarchies that follow on from the murder of Master Arden by his wife: immediately after the murder is accomplished, Mistress Arden sits down to dinner with her neighbours, attempting to keep a façade of normality. Taking their lead from the transgression and violation of hierarchy enacted by their mistress, the servants consider sitting at the same table as well, rather than wait on their social superiors. Michael, a servant of the Ardens whose murderous services Mistress Arden has engaged earlier on in return for reward, suggests to his fellow maidservant: 'Susan, shall thou and I wait on them?/ Or, […] let us sit down too' (xiv.288-9). Particularly significant to this emulation of the mistress's transgression is contemporary moralists' conception of husband and wife and master and servant as parallel categories, as is clear from the structure of a number of contemporary domestic guides and household manuals, including William Gouge's *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622). Michael's suggestion re-enacts his mistress's violation, for he occupies a position in relation to her that is parallel to her own position to her husband. The simultaneity of Mistress

Arden's transgression, embodied in the absence of her husband from the chair at the head of the dinner table and her placing of her lover 'in my husband's seat' (xiv.287) and the servants' contemplation of violating domestic hierarchy underlines the sense of causality: one form of violation creates another and the mistress's transgression maps into that of the servants. The same sense of violation of hierarchies resultant from the earlier violation of wifely duty and inversion of household hierarchies is further registered when, in the same scene, both the mistress and her maidservant kneel down to 'wash away th[e] blood' of the murdered Arden (xiv.254).

Similarly, in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, the transgression of the house mistress empowers a domestic servant, Nick, to invert hierarchies and perform tasks that contemporary domestic theories assigned to masters and mistresses. Rather than, as Dod and Cleaver (cited above) instruct, watching servants, the mistress of the Frankfords' house becomes herself the object of her servant's careful policing and surveillance. Discovering by chance an erotic encounter between his mistress and her lover, Nick decides: 'I'll have an eye/ In all their gestures' (vi.178-9), proceeding to monitor both closely and eventually revealing the affair to his unsuspecting master and shaping the course of the tragedy. These precedents constitute a relevant context for Webster's construction of Zanche, but they are not passively adopted by him. Instead, they are re-worked and provided with a new spin. Michael, Susan and Nick all end up punished, executed and burnt alive (in the case of the first two, respectively) and put in their places in the social hierarchy (in the case of the last). They are all made to repent their transgression, but this is not the case for Zanche.

Zanche's first appearance on stage in Act I, scene ii, is crucially designed to coincide with the act of betrayal that will destroy the house of which she is part. Zanche enters the stage with props that will facilitate Duke Bracciano's seduction of Vittoria, 'a carpet' and 'two fair cushions', a visual statement that Zanche's duty to serve her mistress is perverted

and used to unlawful ends. This same setting will be the space in which Vittoria, twenty-five lines later, tells the Duke a dream which Flamineo, her brother and pander, interprets as her 'ha[ving] taught him [Bracciano] in a dream/ To make away his duchess and her husband' (258-9). Acting not only as a facilitator of the transgression that this meeting constitutes and the domestic disorder that it is about to unleash, Zanche also acts as a witness and a commentator, describing the erotic encounter to the audience and drawing their attention to the physical nearness of those two, emphasising the tableau they form which, crucially, will spell chaos later on: 'See now they close,' she says (214).

The far-reaching effect of the disintegration of the house is registered through Zanche's later appearances in the play. The violation of domestic hierarchies that Vittoria sets in train finds its parallel, as in the domestic tragedies discussed earlier, in the servant's behaviour. Zanche verbally and physically rebels against her two mistresses, Vittoria and Vittoria's mother, Cornelia, in terms that would have been shocking to contemporary masters and mistresses watching the play. Struck by Cornelia for being Flamineo's, Cornelia's son's, 'haggard' (i.e. female wild hawk (OED. a), suggesting an untamed state) and ordered by her to '[f]ly to th'stews', suggesting Zanche is a prostitute despite the absence of any reference to promiscuity on her part and the only context within which her sexuality is discussed, up to this point, being marriage to Flamineo (V.i.186; 151-62), Zanche retaliates with violent speech: 'She's [Cornelia] good for nothing but to make her maids catch cold a'nights; they dare not use a bed-staff, for fear of her light fingers' (V.i.189-91). Zanche characterises her mistress as a miser and a thief who will not allow her maids staffs to make their beds.[14] Early modern moralists and commentators on the duties of servants recognised abuse as sometimes an inevitable part of the servant's experience, but their advice to the servant in this situation is unequivocal: the influential William Gouge, for example, writing in 1622, poses the rhetorical question, 'What if master and mistresse be sharpe, rigorous, and cruell [?],' only to draw on

the Bible to provide an answer that is the opposite of Zanche's behaviour in this scene: '*Be subiect with all feare to the froward: for conscience toward God endure griefe, suffering wrongfully'* (italics original) (sig. Qq8r). Submission and endurance are key, according to Gouge. On the specific topic of servants' experiencing physical violence and abuse, Gouge insists that servants' duty to obey should include '[p]atiently bear[ing] all manner of reproofe and correction' (sig. Rr2r). More important and relevant to Zanche's situation in this scene is Gouge's consideration of unjust correction. Here, he considers two points: firstly, that the servant is in no position to

> be their owne Iudges whether their correction be iust or vniust: for men are so prone to sooth themselues and to extenuate the euill actions which they doe (sig. Rr3r).

The servant's perception of the justice or otherwise of the reproof they are subjected to is beside the point, for they cannot be trusted to objectively judge the act. Secondly, admitting that correction could be sometimes unjust, Gouge instructs that: 'though correction be iniustly inflicted, yet it is patiently to be endured' (sig. Rr2v). However, if correction was 'extreme,' Gouge concedes that a servant may be provoked to respond, but qualifies the *manner* of responding, allowing certain forms of response and forbidding others:

> There is difference betwixt a spightfull, reuengefull contradicting of that which is spoken, and an humble, mild, reuerend, seasonable apologie for that which is vniustly censured. *This* is lawfull: but *that* is forbidden. (sig. Rr3r)

Drawing on a Christian worldview, Gouge recommends endurance to the servant thus unjustly treated. Zanche's verbally violent and insulting retaliation measured against Gouge's theorization seems transgressively 'spightfull', rather than 'humble' or 'reuerend'. To drive

the point about Zanche's subversive behaviour further, Webster offers a parallel scene, Act V, scene iv, in which Zanche similarly acts in ways that Gouge would censor. Taking part in the mourning activities surrounding Cornelia's son's corpse led by Cornelia herself, Zanche appears to avail herself of the opportunity to avenge her wrong. Being the first to notice Flamineo, Cornelia's son's murderer, approaching the space imagined on the stage as a private room where the corpse is attended to, Zanche, in what Purcell describes as an act of *schadenfreude* (75), makes sure her mistress notices the man who has killed her son: 'Look you, who are yonder' (V.iv.74) and again ''Tis Flamineo' (81). Zanche even refers to her mistress as 'foolish' (74).[15] Revelling in her mistress's misery, Zanche's vengeful behaviour seems to embody the attributes that Gouge warned servants against adopting as a response to being treated unjustly, describing such servants as being 'so possessed with a deuill, as they will seeke all the reuenge they can, if they be corrected' (sig. Rr3v).

Zanche's violation of domestic priorities and her inversion of household hierarchies is registered further in her treatment of Vittoria. Zanche embodies most of the attributes that contemporary theories of domestic service associated with the bad servant: disobedient, treacherous, revealer of masters' secrets, corruptible and lustful. Keeping masters' secrets, in particular, was singled out by Thomas Becon as an essential one of the 'duties to be observed by maids,' instructing 'that they be not full of tonge, and of much babling' and commanding the maidservant: 'let her kepe silence' (sig. cccccxxxiffr). Masters and mistresses were instructed to avoid involving their servants in their private affairs lest they share domestic happenings with the world outside: a character in Richard Bernard's *Conference* advises masters and mistresses that 'if wrongs bee between them,'

> [t]hey must beware that the houshold become not partners in the matter; for seruants by slander, flattery, and whisperings will kindle the contention, and make a prey of them (sig. B7v).

The possibility of domestic servants 'mak[ing] prey' of their masters and mistresses, of them being potential predators resonates with Flamineo's description of Zanche as a wolf (V.i.155).[16] Zanche, then, is the nightmare of these moralists come true. In fact, Webster goes out of his way to stress this aspect of her character, this subversion of conventions associated with the good servant when he gets her involved with the disguised Duke of Florence, an element of the plot that Russell Brown condemned as 'a subsidiary plot that does not materially alter anything' (21). It might not change anything immediately in the plot, but it does serve to further associate Zanche with the figure of the disobedient servant. Attracted to the disguised Duke of Florence, Zanche offers herself, promising to provide him with two things as her dowry: she will, firstly, reveal to him domestic secrets that 'shall startle your blood' (V.i. 230), dark and well-guarded secrets relating to the fact that her mistress Vittoria and the latter's lover murdered her master, Camillo, and Duke Bracciano's duchess. Secondly, she will, she says, 'this night rob Vittoria' to finance the escape plan she hopes to make with her presumed lover: 'In coin and jewels/ I shall, at least, make good unto your use/ A hundred thousand crowns' (255, 257-9). Zanche, then, is a site on which contemporary fears and anxieties about domestic servants are projected. As such, it is not surprising that, throughout the play, she is paralleled with the woman who occupies exactly the same position: the site on which anxieties about female sexuality and unruly women are projected, her mistress Vittoria.[17] Importantly, both women become targets of other characters' misogyny and eventual violent punishment in an attempt to assuage these anxieties and put both the disobedient servant and rebellious mistress in their places. The play, however, ends on a different note, refusing to offer a simple didactic lesson over the corpse of a disobedient servant.

Zanche's trajectory parallels that of her mistress. Each woman has a transgressive love affair with a higher ranking man: Vittoria's is with a duke while she, in the words of her

mother, comes from a 'poor' family (I.ii.315); Zanche's is with Flamineo, her mistress's brother whose relationship with her is transgressive enough to partially provoke the murder of Flamineo's brother (V.i). Moreover, both women take the initiative in their love affairs, displaying an active agency: Vittoria, as discussed above, agitates to get her husband out of the way in I.ii and thus spend the night with Duke Bracciano, asking her brother: 'How shall's rid him hence?' (162)—the pronoun 'us' in her question suggests that she views herself as an active participant in the drama of the seduction, rather than its passive subject. Similarly, Zanche, upon seeing the disguised Duke of Florence, determines that he is 'a goodly person' and decides that '[w]hen he is at leisure I'll discourse with him in our own language' (V. i. 94-6), which she proceeds to do later on in the scene, declaring to the man: 'I love you' (V.i. 217). Moreover, both women adopt a similar strategy to get their men to do their wishes: telling a story in the form of a supposed dream which conveniently suggests each woman's desire. As discussed earlier, in Act I, scene ii, Vittoria employs a dream to suggest to Duke Bracciano a possible course of action to pave their way as lovers. Similarly, Zanche communicates her sexual interest in the disguised Duke through telling him a dream that involved him 'stealing to my bed' where 'you lay down by me' and '[y]ou were somewhat bold with me' (IV.iii. 228, 233, 235). Not surprisingly, both women are described in similar terms: they are both called devils (III.ii.70, V.i.84),[18] both likened to wolves (IV.ii.92, V.i.155) and both described as Furies (III.ii.277, V.vi.227).

These parallels between the two disobedient women make them both the target of attempts to punish and put them in their places. Not only is Zanche silently present throughout the scene of Vittoria's arraignment, thus visually acting as an object of examination and accusation as much as her vocal mistress is, but she is also condemned alongside her mistress to the House of Convertites for being, according to the judge, Vittoria's 'bawd'—a judgment that surprises Flamineo who rightly expected himself to be named: hearing the judge

condemn Vittoria together with ‘your bawd’, Flamineo frets in an aside, ‘who, I?,’ only to feel relieved when Zanche is named, ‘O, I am a sound man again’ (III.ii. 262-5). This identification of the two women as threats to established hierarchies is underlined once more in Act V, scene vi. Faced by the armed Flamineo, both women manage to trick him into allowing them to shoot at him first, merging into one being and promising together, in one voice, ‘most religiously’ to aim at their own breasts next (99). The stage image that follows is a tableau of inverted order: the two women ‘tread upon him’ (118), thus visually subverting the conventional hierarchy that placed men above women. In this tableau, however, another form of violation is captured, that of a servant treading upon her social superior alongside her mistress. This stage image is reminiscent of Mistress Arden of *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham* trying to clean the floor of her house of her husband’s blood alongside her maidservant, as discussed above. The image of the sister and the servant treading the brother and master under their feet is an embodiment of the period’s fears about the disorder predicted to result from family ‘couplements’, husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant failing to know their places. This sense was captured in William Jones’s contention ‘[t]hat a familie may be well-ordered, it is requisite that these three couplements […] doe keepe their ranke’ (sig. D4r).

Having visually established the two women as similar in terms of the threat they both pose to established hierarchies, the play’s identification of them with each other ends here, as it proceeds to show in its final movement how one of them recants her previous rebellion and the other refuses to do the same even at the moment of death. Importantly, Webster’s triumphantly disobedient woman is not the play’s heroine, but her servant. They still echo each other in terms of their courage: ‘I shall welcome death/ As princes do some great ambassadors,’ Vittoria announces, promising bravely, ‘I shall meet thy weapon half way’ (V. vi. 219-221). Similarly, Zanche announces her pride that, given her dark complexion, she

'shall n'ever look pale,' thus death cannot frighten her (V.vi.231). Killed, these women appear to have been punished, brought under control and put in their places. However, Zanche's final moments on stage echo her disobedience throughout the play in a way that her mistress's fail to. Rather than merely 're-enact[ing] her mistress's career in simplified form in the last act,' as Christina Luckyj writes ('John Webster' xxiii), Zanche becomes the actor in her own story which differs from her mistress's. Vittoria dies regretting her transgression, almost repentant: 'O my greatest sin lay in my blood./ Now my blood pays for it' (V.vi.240-1). The inclusion of 'sin' seems to evoke her adultery, thus this 'blood' perhaps refers to her lust, as opposed to the sense of 'blood' as family connection. This sense is strengthened by her regretting having ever known Duke Bracciano, stating in her final line: 'O happy they that never saw the court,/ Nor ever knew great men but by report' (261-2). More important than her repentance of her sin, Vittoria dies repentant of violating hierarchies and challenging the social order. In her final moments, she insists on observing social hierarchies: ordering the assassin who threatened to 'cut off your train [i.e. servant]' first: 'You shall not kill her first. […]/ I will be waited upon in death; my servant/ Shall never go before me' (V.vi.216-8). Vittoria dies asserting her identity as a mistress, thus re-inscribing herself in the social order that places her above Zanche even as it placed her husband above her. Zanche, however, disobedient and rebellious till the end, announces at the moment of her death an important truth that levels the differences between herself and her social superiors, Vittoria included: 'I have blood/ As red as either of theirs' (V.vi. 228-9). It is Zanche, I believe, who, in the final analysis, defies containment and refuses to be put in her place. Zanche remains a disobedient servant till the end, and, if her disobedience early on was no more than a result and signifier of her mistress's transgression, a product of another's actions, it is in her death that she asserts her independence from her mistress's actions: Vittoria can claim her as her servant and insist on precedence, yet she knows that her blood is not inferior to Vittoria's. In its final moments,

the play, unlike the more conservative domestic tragedies discussed above, does not put penitent words in its disobedient servant's mouth. While Zanche is killed at the end, she certainly does not die repentant or validating the social order: whether this is to be seen as a celebration of her disobedience or perhaps as a statement about the extremity of her corruption, her being beyond redemption, the play leaves open for its audiences to decide. It is in this refusal to pin down the meaning of the servant's disobedience that Webster's originality and the specificity of his approach to the figure of the disobedient servant emerge: he offers his audiences a disobedient servant, but shies away from steering their reaction to her one way or the other at the end of the play. *The White Devil*, in the final analysis, breaks new ground unexplored in the tradition of domestic tragedies with which it engages: a disobedient and defiant servant dies unrepentant.

Notes

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[1] See Francesca Royster's '"Working like a dog": African Labor and Racing the Human-Animal Divide in Early Modern England' in Philip D. Beilder and Gary Taylor, eds., *Writing Race Across the Atlantic World, Medieval to Modern* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 113-15; Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Celia R. Daileader, *Racism, Misogyny, and the 'Othello' Myth: Inter-racial Couples from Shakespeare to Spike Lee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[2] See Lara Bovilsky's reading of Zanche as one of 'national others' with whom 'the Florentine and Roman scenes are populated'. 'Black Beauties, White Devils: The English Italian in Milton and Webster' (638).

[3] The only exception is a small section of Ann Rosalind Jones's article on the play, but, as the title clearly suggests, Jones's concern is Zanche's Otherness, and her consideration of the character's servant identity is only carried out in the context of thinking about her being 'triply gullible' by virtue of her being a moor, a servant and a woman (114).

[4] In making this assumption, I follow Eva Griffith's contention that 'early modern authors themselves used "anatopism" to think about real life places through fictional ones: "remote locations"—in terms of geography, period or myth—were readily understood to represent English society in general' (3-4).

[5] James R. Hurt discussed the inverted religious, rather than domestic, norms in the play, which complements my reading.

[6] A number of critics argue that Vittoria is innocent of murder. See, for example, Ralph Berry (52-3). However, other critics agree with my reading that she is portrayed as an active agent. Robert F. Whitman described her as 'manifest[ing] an almost total absence of restraint or moral sense in her drive to satisfy her individual needs' (899). Similarly, Larry S. Champion, even as he describes her as 'capable of provoking a tragic response from the audience', condemns Vitoria as 'quite capable with no qualms whatever of suggesting double murder as the most expedient means of removing any impediment which might bar her continued liaison' (457). More recently, Stephen Purcell has described her as being 'just as clever and manipulative as her brother' (13).

[7] Some critics dispute the extent to which the play ends with the restoration of order given the new Duke's association with deception and his young age. See, for example, Gail Bradbury (462).

[8] Hurt (1962) argues that 'the characters are rebels against the order of nature' (46), a reading of the play that complements mine.

[9] Though he is portrayed as a dupe, Camillo is not entirely oblivious to his wife's transgression and Duke Bracciano's designs on her: he complains to Flamineo in this scene about 'The duke your master [who] visits me' (I.ii.63). This characterization of Camillo elevates him above wittols, contented cuckolds, perhaps creating some sympathy for him.

[10] All quotations from *The White Devil* are from John Russell Brown's edition (1996).

[11] Vittoria's husband is not absent at this stage, yet his incompetence makes him similarly unavailable to control the house and carry out his duties as master.

[12] All quotations from *The Tragedy of Arden of Faversham* are from M. L. Wine (1973).

[13] All quotations from *A Woman Killed with Kindness* are from Martin Wiggins (2008).

[14] I follow Russell Brown's (1996) reading (128).

[15] Purcell suggests this 'might be spoken with relish' (74).

[16] This is not confined to Zanche's characterization. James T. Henke argues that 'most of [the play's] references [to animals] allude to the relationship of predator and prey' (631).

[17] This aspect of play's depiction of Vittoria has been previously covered. See, for example, Purcell (133-7); Lisa Hopkins.

[18] Huston Diehl argues that the likening of both women to devils is not limited to the language of the play. She reads Vittoria and Zanche's action of treading on Flamineo in V.vi, and which I discuss later in this paper, as evoking the emblematic image of 'lost souls being trapped underfoot by demons of hell to express the idea of God's vengeance on the wicked' (41).

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